

Message Text

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63

ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03 H-02

INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

USIA-06 EB-07 OMB-01 COME-00 TRSE-00 STR-04 TAR-01

FRB-03 GSA-01 CIEP-01 CEA-01 SIL-01 LAB-04 INT-05

ARAE-00 /097 W

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P R 071810Z AUG 75

FM AMCONSUL PARAMARIBO

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 2120

INFO AMEMBASSY GEORGETOWN

AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE

AMEMBASSY KINGSTON

AMEMBASSY SANTO DOMINGO

AMCONSUL CURACAO

AMCONSUL MARTINIQUE

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EO 11652: NA

TAGS: EMIN, EIND, NS

SUBJ: SURALCO WORKERS RIOT OVER RETRENCHMENT

REF : A. PARAMARIBO 0263; B. PARAMARIBO 0201

1. ESTIMATED 400 LABORERS AT SURALCO'S PARANAM SMELTING AND REFINING COMPLEX YESTERDAY RIOTED IN COMPANY AREA, DESTROYING AND PILFERING FILES, SPARE PARTS, OTHER EQUIPMENT IN ADMINISTRATION BUILDING AND WAREHOUSE. WINDOWS BROKEN, CAR OVERTURNED, THREE SURINAMER STAFF MEMBERS BRIEFLY MADE HOSTAGE AND RELEASED. TIPPED OFF, ALL OF FEW AMERICANS WORKING AT PARANAM HAD DEPARTED BY TIME BUILDINGS ATTACKED. SEVERAL SURINAMERS TREATED FOR MINOR INJURIES. ALUMINA REFINERY SHUT DOWN AS SAFETY PRECAUTION, BUT ALL OPERATIONS HAVE RETURNED

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TO NORMAL TODAY AND SITUATION IS QUIET, ACCORDING POLICE AND

COMPANY SOURCES.

2. SPONTANEOUS DISTURBANCE, FIRST IN 58 YEARS OF SURALCO OPERATIONS HERE, WAS RESULT OF INCREASING ANXIETY OF UNSKILLED WORKERS, ALL IN CENTRAL LABOR POOL, OVER UNCERTAIN PROSPECTS FOR CONTINUED EMPLOYMENT IN FACE OF SURALCO RETRENCHMENTS (REFTELS). CONTRIBUTING FACTOR WAS RESENTMENT AMONG SOME WORKERS WHO FELT KEEN LOSS OF FACE WHEN DEMOTED TO LABOR POOL AFTER CUT-BACKS, HAVING EARLIER RECEIVED TRAINING FOR BETTER JOBS. POOL CONSISTS OF ESSENTIALLY REDUNDANT WORKERS WITH LOW SENIORITY AND WAS FORMED LAST SPRING AS HOLDING OPERATIONS WHILE COMPANY AND GOS ATTEMPTED WORK OUT ALTERNATIVES TO FIRING. PLAN PUT FORWARD BY GOS, AND ACCEPTED BY ALCOA/SURALCO, TO USE LABORERS AT GOS EXPENSE FOR ROAD BUILDING HAS NOT JELLED AND COMPANY RECENTLY HAS BEEN NEGOTIATING TO RELEASE WORKERS UNDER COMPANY UNEMPLOYMENT BENEFIT SCHEME.

3. PRESSURES ROSE EARLIER THIS WEEK WHEN LEADERS OF RELATIVELY MODERATE MOEDERBOND AND LEFTIST C-47 LABOR CONFEDERATIONS, BOTH VYING FOR CONTROL OF PARANAM UNION, MET WITH WORKERS AND CRITICIZED COMPANY RETRENCHMENT, WARNED MASS LAY-OFFS WOULD TAKE PLACE SOON, AND, IN CASE OF MOEDERBOND LEADER (CYRIL DAAL) CHARGED COMPANY WITH BAD FAITH, ALLEGING ALCOA REPS HAD ASSURED HIM WHEN HE RECENTLY IN US ON LEADER GRANT THAT NO FIRINGS WOULD TAKE PLACE. SURALCO MANAGING DIRECTOR BUSTION TELLS ME BREAKDOWN IN COMMUNICATIONS BETWEEN WORKERS AND UNION LEADERSHIP, WITH WHOM HE HAS BEEN NEGOTIATING, IS MAJOR FACTOR IN TURMOIL SINCE LEADERSHIP HAS BEEN PREOCCUPIED WITH POLITICS OF SITUATION. NOW, TO CALM MATTERS, SURALCO HAS AGREED TO FURTHER POSTPONEMENT OF WORKER RELEASES PENDING ADDITIONAL TALKS WITH GOS AND UNIONS.

4. TWO DISTURBING ELEMENTS CONTAINED IN PRESENT SITUATION: OWING TO SLOW-DOWN DURING PAST FEW DAYS OVER WAGE AND PERKS DISPUTE WITH MINJUSTICE AND POLICE, POLICE REFUSED TO GO TO AID OF COMPANY AT PARANAM PENDING "GUARANTEES" FROM MINISTER. THESE NOT FORTHCOMING AND RIOT OVER BY TIME FEW INSPECTORS ARRIVED ON SCENE. OTHER ELEMENT IS PRESENT DETERMINATION OF COMPANY TO RETALIATE IN SOME WAY.

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5. I HAVE EXPRESSED OUR CONCERN TO VICE MINPRES VAN GENDEREN OVER SEEMING INABILITY OF GOS TO PROTECT AMERICAN PROPERTY AND OUR HOPE THAT WAY CAN BE FOUND TO ENSURE POLICE RESPONSIVENESS IN EVENT ATTACKS ON AMERICAN-OWNED PROPERTY OR U.S. CITIZENS. HE ASSURED EVERYTHING POSSIBLE WOULD BE DONE TO PROVIDE NECESSARY PROTECTION IN FUTURE. TO SURALCO'S MANAGER I HAVE URGED HE CAREFULLY CONSIDER WHETHER ANY RETRIBUTIVE ACTIONS MIGHT ONLY SATISFY THE ITCH WHILE INCREASING THE TENSION.

6. COMMENT: RIOTS, UNCHARACTERISTIC OF SURINAM SCENE, WILL HAVE IMMEDIATE EFFECT OF FURTHER DETERING INTEREST IN INVESTMENT HERE AND SHARPENING UNCERTAINTIES OVER POST-INDEPENDENCE STABILITY IN FOREIGN AND DOMESTIC BUSINESS CIRCLES. AT VERY LEAST, EXODUS TO HOLLAND WILL SWELL; ESPECIALLY OF INDIANS WHO ARE RETURNING NO-CONFIDENCE VOTE IN DAILY GREATER NUMBERS AT AIRPORT.
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